



# COALITION ON HUMAN NEEDS

1120 Connecticut Avenue, NW Suite 910 \* Washington, DC 200036 \* 202.223.2532 \*  
www.chn.org

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**CONTACT:** Deborah Weinstein  
(202) 223-2532 ext. 31  
dweinstein@chn.org

## **Coalition on Human Needs Calls for Investments to Help Hard-working Americans Share in Nation's Prosperity**

*Despite Fifth Year of Economic Recovery,  
Millions Lack Health Coverage And Worse Off Than During The Last  
Recession*

*Editor's note: Executive Director Deborah Weinstein is available for interviews today. She can also arrange interviews with analysts in state organizations that can comment on the implications of changes in the poverty rate in their states.*

**WASHINGTON, DC** –Advocates for low-income families said Tuesday that new census data on income and poverty shows that the nation's recent economic recovery is still leaving low-income families worse off than they were in the last recession. Adding to their hardships, over two million more people were uninsured in 2006 than in 2005, including 700,000 children.

“Too many Americans continue to be mired in poverty and struggling not to fall behind,” said Deborah Weinstein, Executive Director of the Coalition on Human Needs. “These latest numbers should be a call to action for Congress to move forward and expand health care coverage for children and services to low-income families.”

According to the new Census data, 12.3 percent of all Americans were poor in 2006; statistically unchanged from the previous year and still well above the 11.5 percent poverty rate in 2001, when the nation was in recession. Median income rose slightly, but has not yet regained its pre-recession level. Earnings for both men and women have declined for the third straight year; only more workers per household have kept overall income from declining.

A major battle is expected this fall when Congress returns to Washington and moves forward on key budget and appropriations issues. Legislation moving

through Congress makes modest investments in programs that help working families, such as health care, education, job training, and assistance with food, housing, and energy. Pending legislation offers significant improvements in children's health care and food stamps. The President has threatened to veto those bills and has called for funding cuts instead.

Some of the policy choices Congress will confront include whether to:

- Provide health insurance to millions of eligible uninsured children *or* to deny coverage for them and eliminate health care for another 800,000 children now insured, as the president seeks.
- Provide enough new funds to hire more than 9,000 new K-12 teachers in primarily low-income schools *or* leave tens of thousands of children struggling to learn in overcrowded classrooms, as in the president's budget.
- Help the 1.2 million families whose electricity or gas was shut off this year by restoring funds for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), *or* to further cut LIHEAP as the president proposes, so that 978,000 fewer families will get help next year.
- Restore funding for Head Start, which has been cut more than 10 percent since 2002 and currently only reaches about half of eligible children, *or* to cut funding 4 percent below current levels as the president proposes, which would serve at least 19,000 fewer children than Congress has proposed.

"Congress should seize the chance to invest in improvements that strengthen families and should reject the President's unwarranted cuts," Weinstein said. "Today's findings prove again that millions of America's families are not sharing in the nation's prosperity. The President wants to make things worse."

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*The Coalition on Human Needs (CHN) is an alliance of organizations working together to promote public policies that address the needs of low-income and other vulnerable populations. The Coalition's members include advocates for young and old, groups concerned with housing, health care, education, civil rights, and disabilities, research and policy professionals, service providers, and labor and religious organizations. You can find a list of the Coalition members at [www.chn.org](http://www.chn.org).*